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Miriam's Purim Play

By

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CHARACTERS.

GRANDMA COHEN.
MIRIAM COHEN.
HELEN.
FRANCES.
CLAIRE.
VIRGINIA.
OTHER GIRLS.

SAM.
LEON.
GEORGE.
JAMES.
OTHER BOYS.

SCENE.

A modern living room. Piano at right. Table with books at left. Book-case at back, chairs, etc.

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Miriam's Purim Play

ACT I.

(*Curtain rises on Grandma Cohen and Miriam. Grandma Cohen rocks comfortably in center of stage, knitting. Miriam sits on foot-rest, looking up at her, half facing audience.*)

MIRIAM—Grannie, tell me a story, a real nice story.

GRANDMA C. (*smiling*)—A good story? Let me see,—do you know what day this is?

MIRIAM—Tuesday, of course.

GRANDMA—Ah, yes, but it is a holiday, too. Now think hard, Miriam!

MIRIAM—I've forgotten.

GRANDMA (*drops knitting*)—Well a long time ago, in a land far, far away, the Jewish people celebrated joyfully this holy day, because they had just been delivered from a dreadful massacre—.

MIRIAM (*interrupts*)—That always happened, didn't it?

GRANDMA C.—Yes, but on that day they had extra cause to rejoice, for they were saved by their own queen, who—

MIRIAM (*claps her hands*)—Oh, I know, I know —she was Esther.

GRANDMA C.—You see, dear, you know the story, too.

MIRIAM (*jumps up and dances about the room*) —Oh, Grandma, I have the best plan! I am going to call Helen and the other girls, and act out your story with them. May I?

GRANDMA C.—Surely, dear; and I will help you play it!

MIRIAM (*runs to door and calls*)—Helen, oh Helen,—Ruthie,—Frances,—Claire—come, come quickly, do!

(*Girls run in excitedly, kiss Miriam and greet Grandma Cohen.*)

GIRLS (*in turn*)—What's the matter?

Why did you call us?

Come out and play!

(*Miriam goes center, next to Grandma. Girls form semi-circle about them.*)

MIRIAM—Oh, girls, I have such a beautiful game!

GIRLS (*in turn*)—What is it?

Do tell us.

Is it fun?

MIRIAM—Grandma just reminded me that to-day is Purim, and she started telling me the story, when —guess what?

GIRLS—What?

MIRIAM—I thought we would act it out, right here.

GIRLS (*in turn*)—Oh, how lovely!

How can we do it?

Let me be Esther!

MIRIAM (*claps hands for silence*)—Do be quiet, girls. Grannie will choose the parts, won't you Grannie? Then she will show us just what to do.

HELEN—I think I should have the leading part; I've acted before.

GIRLS (*chorus*)—So have I—and I.

GRANDMA C. (*shakes her head laughingly*)—If I am to be director, I must have full sway. Attention!

(*Girls take position in straight line.*)

(*Boys' voices heard outside*)—Miriam—Helen, Virginia!

GIRLS (*chorus*)—There are the boys!

GRANDMA C.—Call in the boys, Miriam. They'll wants parts, too.

(*Miriam goes to door; calls "Hello, come in!"*)

(*Boys troop in, greet Grandma C. and girls, and stand at back embarrassedly.*)

GRANDMA C.—Good afternoon, boys. We are glad to see you, because we need your help.

(*Boys look interested.*)

GRANDMA C. (*continues*)—We expect to have a play this afternoon, a Purim play, you know, and of course we must have men in it. Who knows the story?

BOYS and GIRLS—I—and I—and I.

SAM (*speaks up*)—I'd like to be Haman.

(*Hubbub—boys claim various parts.*)

GRANDMA C. (*holds up hands in despair*)—However shall I begin to choose parts, if you make such a racket!

(*Everybody quiets down. Boys form line, like girls.*)

(*Grandma C. looks at them attentively a moment, then counts out on her fingers. As she names each character, the girl or boy leaves the lines and forms another line at right.*)

GRANDMA C. (*counting*)—Let me see—Ahasuerus will be Sam; Haman, George—no James; Mordecai, Leon; the king's guards. Richard, Emil, George and Ben. Now for the girls; Helen, you

may be Vashti; Rebecca and Claire will be your maids; and my little Miriam shall be Esther because the play is hers; Miriam, you will have Ruthie and Charlotte for your maids. All the rest of you have heavy parts; you must be the court people, the common people and the Jewish people in turn.

(*Children cheer*).

GRANDMA C.—Now the cast is settled. Hurry with the scenery.

(*Children move chairs and table, gaily. George carries Grandma Cohen's chair front and right.*)

ACT II.

SCENE I.

(*Same scene as Act I.*)

(*Grandma Cohen sits front, right, with side view to audience. Rest of the stage is clear excepting for foot-rest at center.*)

GRANDMA C. (*speaking to children back of scenes*)—

And now dear children, start the play;
Show just what caused the first Purim Day!

(*Enter Vashti and two maids. Vashti sits on rest; maids pretend to fan her. A knock is heard at the door.*)

VASHTI—Enter.

(*King's Guard advances and bows low*)—

The king Ahasuerus, thus sends his command,
That Thou before his banquet stand!

VASHTI (*jumps up*)—

What's this I hear the King's guard say,
What wants the King of me to-day?

GUARD—

He doth command thee lady, proud,
To show thyself before the crowd;
They banquet in the dining-hall,
They praise his wondrous treasures all,
So, for the loveliest he now makes call!

VASHTI (*angrily*)—

No, no, I will not go,
The King shall not make
Of his queen a show!

(*Guard departs—Vashti and maids follow haughtily.*)

GRANDMA COHEN (*to audience*)—

It's easy of course to guess the rest—
Ahasuerus hears that his request
Is denied him by his haughty queen,
And so his rage grows hot and mean;
He takes away from her the crown
And from her throne he puts her down;
And then he calls to him that day
Maidens from near and from far away,
And chooses Esther to be his queen,
Esther, the lovely Jewess, for queen!
But here come the players, so listen well,
They have the rest of the story to tell.

SCENE II.

(*Enter Mordecai, at left. He walks up and down the stage with his hands clasped and head bent.*)

MORDECAI—

Because, I, Mordecai, would not bow before him,
Haman hath sworn revenge,
Revenge upon all Israel because of his pride—
Woe, that our people should perish so!

The pride that asketh flattery day and night.
(*Enter Esther right door, followed by two maids.*)
ESTHER (*running up to Mordecai*)—
Oh, Mordecai, my uncle,
Why sorrowest thou so sad?
From my window I observed thee,
And I knew thy heart grieved bad!
MORDECAI—
Esther, my niece, the Queen,
Esther, the Jewess, the Queen,
Affliction awaits thy people,
Yea, the kinspeople of the Queen.
Haman, the wicked, hateth us all,
From the King hath he pledge to murder us all.
ESTHER (*amazed*)—
Haman desireth, thou dost say
To murder all Jews—nay, Uncle, nay,
Ahasuerus would never permit such a thing—
How can'st thou think so ill of the King?
MORDECAI—
Hast told him child, that thou are a Jew?
ESTHER—
Nay, Uncle, that thou forbad'st me to do!
MORDECAI—
Then make thee ready to fulfill thy share.
To do thy part for Israel.
For thou art a Jewess,—thou art the Queen,
And now thy people thou must save!
ESTHER—
I swear by the God of Abraham, I swear by
Jehovah the great.
To redeem my own, my people,
From destruction's fearful fate.
Though I may lose my life, perchance,
Going unasked to see the King.

Despite the law, I swear to go,
And I will do this thing!
(*Exit Esther and Mordecai.*)

SCENE III.

(*Enter King, followed by two servants.*)
KING (*walks up and down*)—
The night grows long and cheerless,
I call on sleep in vain;
(*to servant*)
Go, bring me in the tablets,
And read to me of fame.
(*Servant brings in book—reads*):
SERVANT:
It is written, herein, that Mordecai
The Jew, sat at the gate,
And heard thy servants' plotting
To bring thee to ill fate.
It is written, herein, that Mordecai,
The Jew, then made known the word,
And saved the King's most precious life
By revealing what he heard.
KING (*musing*):
Mordecai, the Jew, ye say,
What was his reward, his pay?
SERVANT (*looks in book*):
None, my lord, in any way.
KING (*rises*)—
Nay, let it never be told
The King has forgotten a benefit old!
Call hither, Haman, my favorite, to me—
(*Enter Haman, bowing*)
KING (*continuing*)—
Haman, what would'st thou say verily:
What shall be done for him? State the ways.

Whom the King delighteth to honor and praise

HAMAN (*smirking*)—

Nay, my lord, if so humble a word
As that of mine is worth being heard,
Then let the man, whom the King honoreth, be dressed,
In the King's own garment—the very best,
And led on a steed about the town
By a noble man of great renown,
Calling out as loud as he can:
"The King delighteth to honor this man!"

KING—

Make haste, make haste—this plan follow out;
'Tis Mordecai the Jew, thou must lead about.
(*Exit King.*)

HAMAN (*shakes fist and snarls*)—

Methought 'twas I the King must mean!
Ah, but how sweet revenge will seem;—
A heavy curse upon thee, Jew,—
My gallows will hang thee high and true!
(*Exit Haman*).

SCENE IV

(*Children move table to middle of stage. Place three chairs at table.*) (*Enter Esther, at right door.*)

ESTHER (*stands at table*)—

On this second banquet day,
My petition before the King I'll lay;
Oh, God of Israel, lend Thine aid,
To save Thy people, through this humble maid!

(*Enter King and Haman. King shakes Esther's hand; Haman bows low.*)

KING—

What is the petition thou asketh of me?
It shall be granted, whatever it be!

ESTHER—

If I find grace in thine eyes, oh King,
Spare my life I pray,
And save the Jews, my people,
Whose fear is great, to-day!

KING—

Who would have killed thee Esther,
Who would have harmed my queen?
And as to thy people, the Jews,
Who doth their adversary seem?

(*Haman grows fearful and begins to look at the door for escape.*)

ESTHER (*points*)—

Haman the wicked, Haman, our enemy,
To exterminate our people,—so determined he!
And upon yon gallows would he hang up high,
My uncle, my father, the noble Mordecai;—
Save us, I beseech thee, King,
Save us from this evil thing!

KING (*furiously*)—

And so he hath plotted, hath he,
And so he would work this plot—
Nay,—his head shall do the hanging,
Those of the Jews shall not!

(*calls*)

Hither, my men, and seize him,
On the gallows hang him high,
And let all in the kingdom
Know the reason why!

(*Exit men dragging out Haman.*)

ESTHER—

Oh, my king, how shall I thank thee,
Oh, my lord, what shall I say?

KING—

Let the Jews throughout the kingdom

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Make thanksgiving on this
(*Enter all the boys and girls, c*
around the stage.)
*All sing the Purim Song.**

Sing the song of happiness
Praise the God of Right,
Voice a great thanksgiving
To the Lord of Might.
Jehovah, place Thy blessing
Upon Thy children, all,
Let them through the ages
Thy name with love recall!

ACT III.

(*Same as Act I. Grandma Cohen sits in middle of stage, surrounded by children.*)

MIRIAM—Wasn't it lovely, Grannie? Oh, I do thank you for helping us with my Purim play!

BOYS and GIRLS (*in turn*)—

Thank you.
It was fun!
Let's have another some day!

GRANDMA C.—Run along outside and play, now, dearies. After a while I shall bake some gingerbread Hamans for you.

LITTLEST GIRL—With raisins for eyes?

GRANDMA C.—Yes, indeed. But hurry up now before the sun goes down.

(*Exit children, singing Purim Song.*)

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* May be sung to the tune of "God Ever Glorious", Sabbath School Hymnal, page 129 or Jewish Hymnal, page 61.

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